

**TESTIMONY of David Morgan, TEAM Inc IN SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 487, An Act Establishing the Infant and Toddler Early Care and Family Support Initiative
March 29, 2022**

Dear Senator Fonfara, Representative Scanlon and Honorable Members of the Finance, Revenue, and Bonding Committee,

Thank you for for this opportunity to submit my statements in favor of Senate Bill 487, An Act Establishing the Infant and Toddler Early Care and Family Support Initiative.

My name is David Morgan – as a lifelong resident in Connecticut, I have dedicated my entire career toward Early Care and Family Support, including multiple Connecticut Governor and legislative appointments to Connecticut's work in Early Childhood, Child Care, Family Support, and Human Services. I have been an Infant/Toddler caregiver & educator, am a certified educator in the State of Connecticut, and carry multiple credentials in the field of Early Childhood & Human Services at the State and National level. **Above all, I am a father of 3 that witnessed firsthand the empowerment of myself and family's access to Infant & Toddler care for my own gainful employment, my desire and ability to contribute to my community and Connecticut, and how access to Early Care and Family Support was a critical element in the wellbeing of my entire family and the community where I live and work.**

I write this today as the President/CEO of TEAM Inc – a nonprofit early care and family support agency dedicated to the economically disadvantaged people in our region of CT – including some of the State's most distressed communities of Ansonia, Derby, Naugatuck, and Waterbury. In addition to being a father of 3 children as well as an early childhood professional for many years, I believe my perspective as CEO of TEAM Inc is especially unique given TEAM's current success in providing high-quality, nationally accredited, Early Care and Family Support throughout Waterbury and the Greater Naugatuck Valley including Infant/Toddler & Preschool-Age Early Care and comprehensive, multi-generational Family Support services – much of our work has garnered national recognition and keeping Connecticut at the forefront of innovation in Early Care & Family Support and Child Care. TEAM has successfully expanded unprecedented Infant/Toddler capacity in some of the most distressed communities – Ansonia & Derby, and Waterbury. In just a few years, we increased capacity of center-based Infant/Toddler spaces from 0 to 80 (City of Waterbury) and 0 to 32 (Cities of Ansonia & Derby). These numbers continue to increase to more than 60 additional Infant/Toddler spaces as we partner and invest in the exceptionalism of the Family Child Care settings throughout our region's landscape – unfortunately, this has been made possible by very limited federal resources that are no longer available to expand in Connecticut. **However, we are inspired by these models of Infant/Toddler expansion which has made a profound impact on the quality of life for some of our most vulnerable children and families and clearly an indicator of progress toward increasing the economic vitality of Connecticut's communities; Senate Bill 487 is an historical opportunity for the entire State of Connecticut which is at**

a crossroads of a childcare system on the verge of collapse and the pain of this collapse will fall most heavily on the backs of families striving to achieve and maintain gainful employment – thereby resulting in a continued, downward spiral of Connecticut's economic growth and overall vitality to thrive in the market. In addition to the countless corporations and the business community flooding Connecticut with pleas to our State's lawmakers to fund child care, we are also reminded of the overwhelming research and evidence on the financial return on investment of Early Care and Family Support – **most notably the work of Nobel Laureate in economics and an expert in the economics of human development, James J. Heckman, demonstrating that high quality Early Care and Family Support for economically disadvantaged children can deliver a 13% per year return on Connecticut's investment in this initiative!**

TEAM Inc has leveraged multiple distinctions and resources to the State of Connecticut in the work of Family Child Care & Child Care Center Partnerships, top-10% early care & education performance metrics (right here in Connecticut!) in the nation under the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services and the Office of Head Start, Early Head Start & Head Start, Office of Child Care & Office of Early Childhood, and unprecedented expansion of Infant/Toddler capacity in some of the most distressed communities of Connecticut including Ansonia and Waterbury. The achievements and innovations at TEAM Inc and in our Connecticut communities have been showcased in Washington DC and across the country, including a keen commitment to the immense return on investment in high quality Infant/Toddler Care made available to Connecticut's youngest learners and their families.

I enthusiastically support Senate Bill 487 which would redirect existing tax revenue from the budget reserve to a new, non-lapsing Early Care and Family Support account. Funds in this account would then be used to contract with child care providers including family child care throughout Connecticut in order to increase the supply of high quality infant toddler care. Priority will be given to child care providers in lower income child care deserts of Connecticut.

Every hour of every day, we witness the struggles faced by Connecticut families written off the list – the devastating disparities of the wealth gap continued to widen over the past five decades, and was amplified for all to realize during the COVID19 pandemic which is another chapter in how TEAM (deemed an essential nonprofit by the Governor's Executive Orders since the March/2020 onset) never ceased to operate in the Early Care & Child Care and Family Support frontlines over the last 24 months. Layered upon the lack of public investment in Early Care & Child Care over the last 50 years, we find ourselves amidst the most difficult of times in Connecticut on the verge of a childcare collapse and at a critical crossroads for the most essential pillar needed for a vibrant Connecticut: Early Care & Family Support / Child Care.

As we can see, Senate Bill 487 is an unprecedented opportunity for Connecticut's future and for all families from all walks of life to support themselves, adequately provide for

their families and realize their dreams — in doing so, you will not only improve the lives and opportunity of tens of thousands, you will help ignite a Connecticut economy. In closing, I urge you to support Senate Bill 487 An Act Establishing the Infant and Toddler Early Care and Family Support Initiative. Thank you for hearing my perspective on this – please contact me with any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

David Morgan

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